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UNCLAS VIENNA 000777

SIPDIS

SECSTATE FOR PM/DTCC - BLUE LANTERN COORDINATOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: RESULTS OF BLUE LANTERN END-USE CHECK ON
APPLICATION 05-976491

REF: STATE 18354

1. PolOff met with Martin Weger, Maintenance Director of Helikopter Air Transport (Heliair), at the company's facilities in Innsbruck on March 6 to check receipt of 5 lamp assemblies of night vision goggles (NVGs). Weger told us that the company had received four of the five assemblies, with one remaining at Aero Electronic in Germany. Weger explained that the assembly was kept there as a reserve supply and it made little sense for it to be stored at Heliair, as the firm relied on Aero Electronic to install the assemblies. Weger confirmed that there were no problems with the shipment -- Aero delivered the installed assemblies in working order and on time, with intact packaging.

2. Weger gave Embassy officers a brief tour of the company's facilities, showing us how the lights are used in the helicopters. The Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Touring Club (OAMTC), roughly equivalent to the American Automobile Association, owns Heliair. Heliair maintains the helicopters that OAMTC uses for air rescue operations, including rescues of injured or stranded skiers. The assemblies are used for nighttime lighting of cockpit instruments and are installed directly in the helicopters. The facility appeared to be maintained to a high professional standard.

3. Weger said that Heliair was extremely interested in purchasing night-vision goggles for use in night-rescue operations. According to Weger, U.S. authorities had told the company that it was not eligible to receive the goggles because it was not a government organization, although Weger pointed out that Heliair and OAMTC work in close cooperation with Austrian government entities. (The facility that we toured also houses helicopters that the Austrian Ministry of the Interior operates.) The company has outfitted all its helicopters for night-time flying, but has not been able to obtain the goggles pilots need to operate in unknown terrain. Weger asked Embassy for any assistance they could render.
McCaw